

IS
SPOCK
REALLY DEAD?
See Shatner Interview on Page 52)

SPECIAL 5th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

**Featuring: An Exclusive Interview with
STAR TREK'S WILLIAM SHATNER**

**Plus: Pictorial Previews of
DARK CRYSTAL and CREEPSHOW**

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FANTASTIC FILMS

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Talks About E.T.**

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Painting by BARBARA FISTER-LILTZ



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FANTASTIC FILMS

REACTION.....	6
Comments, suggestions, corrections, complaints, footnotes, explanations, threats and promises of glory from our readers.	
DATABANK	8
A look at what's happening in the world of films, theater, literature, conventions and fandom.	
READ OUT	9
Reviews of some of the newer SF literary releases	
E.T./THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL	10
Steven Spielberg's science fiction fairy tale brings tears to the eyes and happiness to the heart.	
DARK CRYSTAL	12
The creators of <i>Star Wars</i> and the <i>Muppet Movies</i> have combined their talents to create a fantasy world unlike anything ever seen before.	
BLADE RUNNER: THE NEW WAVE.	20
A look at Ridley Scott's misunderstood classic from a highly contemporary point of view	
INSIDE THE ULTIMATE FANTASY: WILLIAM SHATNER INTERVIEWED	23
The man who is, was, and always shall be Admiral James T. Kirk speaks his mind.	
TRON	26
Computer generated animation explained, plus a mini-interview with SPFX Director Harrison Ellenshaw.	
ROB BOTTIN DOES HIS THING.....	38
SPFX make up artist Rob Bottin talks about monsters, friends, and the future of SF cinema.	
POLTERGEIST: THE SPFX THAT MADE IT FAMOUS	44
ILM Visual Effects Supervisor Richard Edlund and Animation Supervisor John Bruno tell about some of the effects you either saw or didn't see.	
BLADE RUNNER: DOUGLAS TRUMBULL TALKS ABOUT THE SPECIAL EFFECTS	58
The amazing world of <i>Blade Runner</i> is explored from the final sets to the fiber-optics in this complete SPFX analysis	
FIREFOX: EASTWOOD AND DYKSTRA TALK.	62
Director Eastwood and SPFX Director Dykstra have combined their talents in this SF thriller.	
SYD MEAD DESIGNS THE FUTURE	70
From the <i>Blade Runner</i> ghetto to the game grids of <i>Tron</i> Syd Mead knows what the future looks like.	
THE SECRET OF NIMH	72
Don Bluth Productions have re-established the golden years of Disney animation in their newest film.	
CREEPSHOW.....	74
Director George Romero and Writer Steven King have pooled their talents to make a fun-filled horror film in the old E.C. Comics tradition.	

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From The
Creators Of
STAR WARS
And The
MUPPET MOVIES
Comes A
Fantastic Peek
Into...



The World of The Dark Crystal



Article by J. STEIN

Five years ago, Jim Henson, creator of *The Muppets*, began work on a film project of startling originality. It was to be an adventure story set in another world and another time, a story that married film and fantasy in a way never before attempted. There would be no "reality" as we know it, either human or natural, and yet everything would be totally, palpably "real."

The *Dark Crystal* was a project for which Henson was uniquely suited. As Co-producer/Co-director/Performer, he has brought to it 25 years of experience in creating entertainment magic. Through film and television his creatures of foam and fabric have become tangible heroes to millions around the world.

For Henson an early fascination with film and television led to an interest in puppetry. During his college years Henson won a local Emmy for a regular five-minute show on a Washington, D.C., television station featuring his own puppets, "*The Muppets*." After being graduated from the University of Maryland, Henson moved to New York, where *The Muppets* made regular appearances on such shows as *The Today Show*, *The Tonight Show*, and *The Ed Sullivan Show*. A series of ten- and twenty-second commercials led to filmmaking. His short film *Timepiece* won an academy award nomination in 1964; and a film-video collage, *Youth '68*, was cited by *Variety* as one of the best television programs of the year. *The Muppets* have been part of *Sesame Street* since its inception; and *The Muppet Show*, led by Kermit the Frog, became an international success, winning numerous awards and attracting an audience of some 235 million in over a hundred

Photos: Opposite page; top, Brian Froud's pre-production painting of the Castle of the *Dark Crystal*. Bottom, Froud's rendering of a Pod Person about to be attacked by a gigantic Garthim. This page; top, the decadent Skeksis are encompassed by an opulent feast. Center, Jen and Kira ride atop their landstriders. Bottom, Jen enters Aughra's amazing observatory.





The Dark Crystal Art of Brian Froud

Photos: This page; top row, left to right, Brian Froud's pencil sketch of a "Pod Person." The actual "muppet" creations of the pale pod people are amazingly close to the original concepts. Aughra, the ancient astronomer is a wrinkled and somewhat frightening sight to behold. Second row, left to right, colored pencil sketches of some female Pod People reveal a simple ageless benevolence. The four-armed urRu are sketched out in their first draft in this pencil and wash drawing. This somewhat more "flattened" version of Aughra the astronomer reveals his face was changed and forehead raised for the final makeup. Third row, left to right, the final Pod People muppets gather for conversation. The final urRu design in the movie is highly accurate to its first design. Bottom a final piece of finished pre-production art by Brian Froud shows an urRu at work weaving with all four hands on an archaic loom. Opposite page; clockwise, a pod person nurses Kira back to health. Kira and Jen sneak into the Castle of the Dark Crystal. An urRu weaves on an ancient loom. The deceitful chamberlain is banished by the dying Skeksis emperor. The evil "scientist" Skeksis questions a shakled Pod Person.

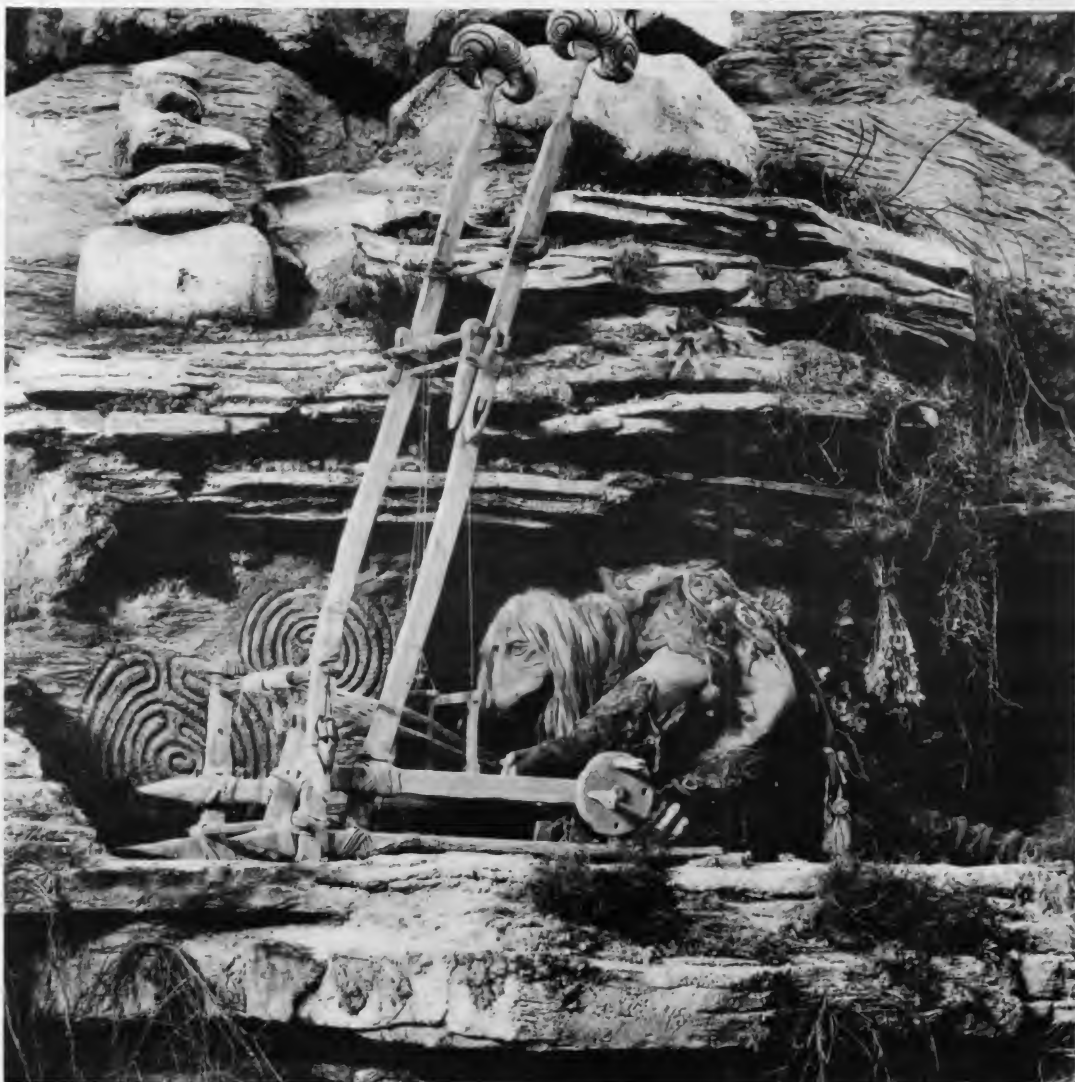


countries. Henson produced *The Muppet Movie* in 1978 and most recently directed *The Great Muppet Caper*.

In order to invent an entirely different look for *The Dark Crystal*, Henson brought on as conceptual designer Brian Froud, an English artist whose work he felt was akin to his own vision of this fantasy world. Born in Winchester, England, Froud studied graphic design at Maidstone Art College, and was graduated in 1971 as an illustrator. He worked first as a freelancer, illustrating books, magazine stories, and a children's edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* before moving to Devon to concentrate on his increasing fascination with the world of fantasy. *The Land of Froud*, an anthology of his work, was published in 1977; and *Faeries*, which he co-illustrated with Alan Lee, was a bestseller in the United States.

Frank Oz, premier puppet performer and his long-time associate with the Muppets, then joined Henson as co-director. Oz met Henson in 1963 while studying journalism in California and was asked to travel to New York for a six-month tryout with the Muppets. He has been associated with Jim Henson and The Muppets ever since, and has become a major contributor to the Muppets' success, bringing life to Miss Piggy, Fozzie Bear, and many other Muppet favorites. Oz, a vice president of Henson Associates, also performed Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back*, has appeared as an actor in *The Blues Brothers* and *An American Werewolf in London*, and co-produced *The Great Muppet Caper*.

Gary Kurtz (Co-producer) is one of the most successful film producers in recent years. His last two films were *Star Wars* (winner of seven Academy Awards) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (winner of two Academy Awards). After majoring in cinema at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, Kurtz set out to gain as wide a variety of practical knowledge and experience in the film industry as possible. He worked in almost every technical craft job on countless low-budget films and television





documentaries over several years before becoming associate producer of *Two Lane Blacktop* and *Chandler*. He then teamed with writer/director George Lucas on *American Graffiti*, ultimately co-producing that film with Francis Coppola. Kurtz and Lucas then spent four years making *Star Wars*.

Under the direction these four men the brilliant performers, designers and technicians of the Henson organization then set to work to push the state of their own art past all known boundaries. And the result of this collaboration is an

astonishing visual experience; a beautiful and revolutionary work that brings new dimensions to our perceptions and our dreams, and that will be seen as a remarkable advance in the use of the film medium.

THE STORY

Out of time and place the world of *The Dark Crystal* is beautiful and strange with a secret, sometimes frightening ambience. It is a world of fantasy and imagination where the forest and swamp breed danger and mystery. Creatures

strange beyond experience hop, crawl, and skitter, singing sweetly or shrieking in unknown languages. Here everything is alive. Plant and tree have the gift of speech, water murmurs the music of forgotten days, and the possible replaces the impossible as mountain and rock become moving beings. The very air is alive with the scent and magic of ancient mysteries. And dominating all is the mystery and the power of *The Dark Crystal*.

Beyond the mountains and wilderness, across the vast and hos-

tile desert, rising above a landscape shorn of life and vegetation, sits the castle of *The Dark Crystal*.

The baroque and turreted castle was once a glowing, fantastic crystalline structure; but now, dimmed by ages of corruption, its grandeur is hidden by layer upon layer of filth and decay.

The story of *The Dark Crystal* is the story of a land unplaced in time or space, dominated by an evil breed called the Skeksis. Once a tribe of exalted thinkers and creators ruled the land from a glittering castle in the heart of which a great





Crystal glowed with power gathered from the world's Three Suns. But a thousand years ago, a terrible and mysterious convulsion shook the world. The Crystal cracked and darkened, the reign of the Skeksis began, and gradually the castle, the land, and its new rulers degenerated until all became dominated by greed and decay. The corrupted Crystal became the key to the Skeksis' power and the center of their strange rituals. As the story begins, a mighty astronomical occurrence is about to commerce. If it is allowed to pro-

ceed uninterrupted, the rule of the Skeksis will be confirmed forever.

The castle is guarded by Garthim, fierce warriors encased in shell-like armor who enforce the Skeksis' rule. There is only one thing the Skeksis fear: an ancient prophecy that the Gelfling, a race of elfin creatures, will somehow destroy their power. To save their dynasty, these cruel rulers have tried to eradicate the Gelfling race, and believe that they have succeeded. But unknown to them one Gelfling boy, Jen, was saved from the Garthim's claws. Plucked from

death, he has been raised by the urRu, a clan of strange, unworldly and impractical mystics, for the day when he will be assigned the task of discovering the secret of the Dark Crystal and restoring its light . . . and true balance to his world.

Jen is brought up by urSu the Master, wisest of the urRu, certain that this young Gelfling is the last of his race. But Jen's sheltered life is shattered by the death of his Master who, with his last breath, sets Jen a task. He shows him the image of a small shard of crystal, and

tells Jen this must be found and returned to its rightful place before the imminent Great Conjunction, when the world's Three Suns will come together as one. If Jen fails, all things whole and good will forever be destroyed.

Even as the Jen's urRu Master lies dying, so, too, does the Emperor of the Skeksis, creating within their ranks rivalry, anger, and dismay. In a power struggle between the strongest of the Skeksis, the Chamberlain and the Garthim Master, the Chamberlain loses his challenge to win the throne, is





stripped of his power, and is banished from the castle.

Meanwhile, Jen, wrenched from the tranquility of the valley of the urRu, is thrust into an adventure filled with danger and excitement. As he travels through the alien wilderness landscape alive with strange, chattering creatures, a Crystal Bat bearing a seeing crystal betrays his existence to the Skeksis. Terrified that the ancient prophecy will be fulfilled, they send their Garthim warriors to track Jen down and destroy him.

Reaching the astonishing observatory of Aughra the astronomer,

Jen finds the crystal shard and learns something of his destiny.

The terrible Garthim attack, and in order to escape, Jen plunges into the swamp, lost and frightened by creatures of bizarre appearance. There Jen is astonished to meet Kira, a Gelfling girl, and realize that another of his kind is alive.

Kira has been sheltered by Pod People, simple peasants who live hidden in the depths of the forest. She guides Jen to her village; and during a happy, roistering feast Jen is so entranced that he wants to abandon his quest and stay forever with Kira and her friends.

This moment of happiness is destroyed by a Garthim attack. Some of the Pod People are captured for transportation to the castle, there to become slaves of the Skeksis. Jen and Kira flee into the forest, where Jen, believing himself at fault, vows to give up his task. He and Kira stumble into the ruins of an old Gelfling village. Wall carvings tell the story of the Gelfling prophecy, and Jen and Kira discover the true meaning of the crystal shard and the urgency of Jen's mission.

The Skeksis' outcast Chamberlain surprises them there and of-





fers his hand, promising friendship in place of fear. Jen is tempted, but Kira is quick to mistrust; she urges Jen to heed his Master's dying words and reject the Chamberlain.

The confrontation hardens Jen's resolve, and he is determined to return the shard to the Dark Crystal. On strange, long-legged beasts that Kira has befriended, they race at incredible speed to the castle. In a vicious fight with Garthim guarding the entrance Jen and Kira are forced over the cliff and fall to the base of the castle, where, dragging

themselves over the mountainous rubbish, they find an entrance through the castle sewers.

Climbing up through the sewers they again come face to face with the disgraced Chamberlain. Once more he tries to persuade them to come with him, but when he is again rejected, he attempts to kill Jen and drags Kira to the Council Chamber. The Garthim Master orders her taken to the Scientist's laboratory, where she will be drained for her life-force. Imprisoned among hundreds of crea-

tures of the forests and fields, Kira calls on all her powers and incites them to break out of their cages to freedom. With time running out Jen fights his way to the Crystal Chamber. There the Dark Crystal floats, shining purple, and the castle dome is open to the sky where the Three Suns are poised to form the Great Conjunction. The Skeksis gather for their power rejuvenation, and Jen, in one final desperate attempt, lunges forward to try to complete his quest and fulfill the ancient prophecy. ■

